

COMMEMORATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY MASSACRE

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Khojaly massacre by Armenian armed forces on February 25–26, 1992 in the town of Khojaly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Khojaly, now under the occupation of Armenian armed forces, was the site of the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians in the course of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Khojaly, once the home to 7,000 people, was completely destroyed. Six hundred thirteen people were killed, of which 106 were women, 83 were children and 56 were purported to have been killed with extreme cruelty and torture. In addition, 1,275 people were taken hostage, 150 went missing and 487 people became disabled. Also in the records maintained, 76 of the victims were teenagers, 8 families were wiped out and 25 children lost both of their parents while 130 lost one of their parents. According to Human Rights Watch and other international observers, the Armenian armed forces were reportedly aided by the Russian 366th Motor Rifle Regiment.

At the time, Newsweek magazine reported: “Azerbaijan was a charnel house again last week: a place of mourning refugees and dozens of mangled corpses dragged to a makeshift morgue behind the mosque. They were ordinary Azerbaijani men, women and children of Khojaly, a small village in war-torn Nagorno-Karabakh overrun by Armenian forces on 25–26 February. Many were killed at close range while trying to flee; some had their faces mutilated, others were scalped.”

As part of the Khojaly population that tried to escape, they encountered violent ambushes that led to abuses, torture, mutilation and death. The Russian organization, Memorial, stated that 200 Azerbaijani corpses were brought from Khojaly to Agdam within four days.

Time magazine published the following description: “While the details are argued, this much is plain: something grim and unconscionable happened in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly 2 weeks ago. So far, some 200 dead Azerbaijanis, many of them mutilated, have been transported out of the town tucked inside the Armenian-dominated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh for burial in neighboring Azerbaijan. The total number of deaths—the Azerbaijanis claim 1,324 civilians have been slaughtered, most of them women and children—is unknown.”

The extent of the cruelty of this massacre against women, children and the elderly was unfathomable. This anniversary reminds us of the need to redouble efforts to help resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. The United States as a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group should continue to stay engaged in the resolution of this protracted conflict.

Mr. Speaker, Azerbaijan is a strong ally of the United States in a strategically important and complex region of the world. I ask my col-

leagues to join me and our Azerbaijani friends in commemorating the tragedy that occurred in the town of Khojaly.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE ALBANY MARINE BAND—MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE, ALBANY, GEORGIA

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute one of our nation's most prestigious and accomplished United States Marine Corps bands—the Albany Marine Band stationed at the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany, Georgia. After 22 years of distinguished service, members of the Albany Marine Band will be performing a farewell concert on Tuesday, February 14, 2012 at the Albany Municipal Auditorium at 7 p.m. in Albany, Georgia.

The farewell concert has been titled “Thanks for the Memories” and admission to the event is free. The musical performance will feature many of the band's greatest hits from over the last several years, including many of the group's most notable award-winning pieces.

Mr. Speaker, last December, amid budgetary constraints, it was announced by the Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., that the Albany Marine Band would be cut along with the Marine Corps band stationed at Twentynine Palms, California. Although their mission is coming to an end, the Albany Marine Band's legacy of musical excellence will not soon be forgotten.

Over the last couple decades, the members of the Albany Marine Band have honorably represented our country and been recognized repeatedly for their harmonious innovations and inspiring melodic renditions. In December of 2003, the band was awarded the distinguished Commander in Chief Installation Excellence Award. This prestigious award recognized the members of the Albany Marine Band for their pride and commitment in performing their duties.

In 2010 and 2011, the Albany Marine Band was recognized as the United States Marine Corps Band of the Year. Additionally, in 2011, the band also received the “Best Live Recording Award” in a competition among the twelve United States Marine Corps bands.

Due to their musical excellence, the Albany Marine Band has performed at locations throughout the United States and around the world. The band has traveled more than fifty thousand miles to perform over one hundred commitments in destinations such as Essex Junction, Vermont; New Orleans, Louisiana; San Antonio, Texas; and the Statue of Liberty in Liberty, New York. It is also worth noting that the Albany Marine Band was given the great honor of being selected to represent the United States in 2004 as it performed for the Changing of the Guard at the Citadel in Quebec City, Canada.

The Albany Marine Band has also performed for nationwide audiences during per-

formances on Good Morning America and at the Outback Bowl in Tampa, Florida.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in applauding the exceptional musical achievements and patriotic commitment of the members of the Albany Marine Band. These fine men and women have served as excellent ambassadors for our country and the United States Marine Corps and I will remain eternally grateful to them for their many noteworthy accomplishments and selfless acts of service.

THANK YOU TO OUR OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND OPERATION NEW DAWN VETERANS

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize those men and women who have served this great Nation while conducting combat operations in Iraq over the past 9 years. From March 20, 2003 until December 31, 2011 our Nation's Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines supported Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn while serving in Iraq. During this time they disarmed and removed Saddam Hussein from power, freed a country and its people from years of suffering under an oppressive dictatorship, and fought a brutal insurgency. Many members of our all-volunteer force, the greatest all-volunteer force in history, served multiple combat tours in Iraq during this time with little dwell time at home.

More than 1.5 million members of the United States Armed Forces served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn conducting operations against a dangerous and determined enemy force. 4,474 members of the United States Armed Forces made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn and 32,223 members of the United States Armed Forces were wounded during almost 9 years of military operations in Iraq. During this time four Medals of Honor, the highest United States award for military valor, were awarded for service in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, additionally, at least 327 Silver Stars, 21 Navy Crosses, and 15 Distinguished Service Crosses were awarded to members of the United States Armed Forces.

I stand today to recognize the tremendous personal sacrifice of the members of the United States Armed Forces who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, many of whom were committed to multiple deployments away from loved ones, and the contributions of military families on the home front. The bravery and service of our all-volunteer force, the best and the brightest that our Nation has to offer, adds to the enduring legacy of the proud history of our armed forces. I am committed to honoring the memory of these heroes for their courage and sacrifice. To all the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who served in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, welcome home and thank you for your service to the United States of America.